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## Research Projects for Europe

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# MAGICC: A Project of the EU Lifelong Learning programme: Modularising Multilingual and Multicultural Academic Communication Competence

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**Abstract:** This report introduces the ERASMUS project of the EU Lifelong Learning programme MAGICC: Modularising Multilingual and Multicultural Academic Competences (2011–2014). Conceived as a complement to the CEFR, the project's main objective was to develop a framework and instruments that can be used to conceptualize and evaluate multilingual and multicultural academic communication competences. Through the Bologna Process, these competences have been becoming increasingly important to students in higher education and therefore need to be integrated as graduate learning outcomes at BA and MA level. To that end, MAGICC provides a conceptual framework, pedagogical scenarios, transparency tools, an academic e-portfolio and an executive summary for future employers.

In the final assessment, the project received 9/10 from the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and was evaluated as an excellent project. Furthermore, experts from the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission call it a success story.

**Keywords:** Multilingual and multicultural competences, conceptual framework, pedagogical scenarios, transparency tool, magic

## 1 Introduction

This article reports on the European project MAGICC: Modularising Multilingual and Multicultural Academic Communication Competence for BA and MA level,

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which was a multilateral ERASMUS project (2011–2014). The main objective was to develop instruments that can be used for the description, the construction and the evaluation of multilingual and multicultural academic communication competences. It has become especially important for learners in higher education to attain these competences, since internationalisation and mobility are being strongly promoted by the Bologna Process and, in parallel with this progression, have been becoming increasingly more important.

The following sections outline the background to and rationale for the project, name the source of funding and the project partners, explain the goals and describe the main results. Information on project partners, the source of funding and assessment and conclusions are also included. This report closes with a list of publications and other dissemination products.

## 2 Background & rationale

The Bologna Process provoked a tremendous change in the the environment at universities regarding multilingual and multicultural demands: due to a higher degree of internationalization, the cultural heterogeneity of student groups and the need for high foreign language(s) competences has increased significantly (e.g. university entrance level B2+ for students without national school diplomas). Students in higher education, therefore, need to have multilingual and multicultural competences and strategies in order to communicate adequately, and not only if they are language students. On the contrary, these competences play an important role for all students, regardless of their field of studies, with respect to their future competitiveness, employability and mobility (Kelly 2013) and thus must be integrated as graduate learning outcomes at BA and MA level.

It is evident that a framework dealing with these competences was long overdue. The framework for modern languages, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of the Council of Europe (CEFR) treats competences in various languages independently from each other and multicultural and strategic competences are not subject of the CEFR. MAGICC, on the other hand, conceptualizes and describes multilingual and multicultural academic and professional communication and strategic competences for higher education (including the first language/s) from a holistic point of view, thereby complementing the CEFR.

### 3 Partners and source of funding

This project was carried out in collaboration with the European Language Council (ELC) and included nine partner universities and one associated partner. The project was coordinated by the University of Lausanne (CH). The eight partner universities were University of Jyväskylä (FI), The Open University (UK), University of Groningen (NL), University of the Algarve (PT), Poznan University of Technology (PL), University of Fribourg (CH), University of Bremen, Free University Berlin (DE). The European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML), Graz (AT) acted as an associate partner in the project.

The project was funded by the EU Lifelong Learning programme with support from the European Commission in combination with matching of thirty percent by the participating partner universities.

### 4 Project goals

The project's principal objective was to integrate multilingual and multicultural academic communication competences into graduate learning outcomes at BA and MA levels. The project was divided into nine individual work packages (WP). The initial phase of the project focussed on conducting structured research into existing practices, tools and concepts and their classification and analysis (WP 1) and the elaboration of the conceptual framework. This process included the consultation of key stakeholders, which were university staff, students and employers across Europe (WP 2). This was the basis for the three main outputs: a collection of scenarios for developing students' multilingual and multicultural core communication competences relevant to academic and professional communication needs at the BA and MA levels (WP4); transnational transparency tools to aid all stakeholders in becoming familiar with and developing a common understanding of the terminology and assessment criteria and grids for both the CEFR and MAGICC (WP5); and an academic ePortfolio structure (WP3), incorporating the other two WPs, producing online resources (IT-based pedagogy) and using a highly innovative multilingual and multicultural approach.

Work packages 6 and 7 were dedicated to dissemination of information through the development of the project website, the organisation of dissemination events, executive summaries allowing customization as well as concrete testing, implementation and agreements with faculties within the partner universities. The final dissemination event was held at the annual conference for The European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS) in Fribourg, Switzerland in September, 2014. The remaining two work packages 8

and 9 were concerned with specific activities for project management and quality assurance.

## 5 MAGICC results

The project is valuable to higher education students, teachers and other stakeholders because it moves forward, keeping up with the times, by progressing from a monolingual approach to describing and conceptualising not only multilingual but also multicultural communication competences, including the first language, for Higher Education. Moreover, the project provides tools for the various stakeholders to understand, interpret and integrate the academic, intercultural and multilingual competences and lifelong learning strategies as well as enabling students to clearly illustrate these competences in their multilingual and multicultural profiles.

MAGICC helps these stakeholders to understand multilingual and multicultural academic communication competences through various transnational tools which integrate academic and professional communication competences, intercultural and lifelong learning skills as well as lifelong learning competence(s) into the student's academic profile. The majority of the information and outputs is available in English, German and French as a PDF and an interactive online version.

The first tool is a conceptual framework which defines the constitutive elements of these competences. It serves as a basis to develop curricula and compare students' competences. It also contains specific learning outcomes, which are transnational. Moreover, it includes assessment criteria and assessment grids, both of which are related to academic, intercultural and strategic competences. The online version of this framework is interactive and user-friendly, allowing the users to select all or choose a specific activity (i.e. reading, listening, speaking interaction, independent learning, etc.) and competence. For ease, all competences have been colour coded throughout the tools: communication competences are blue, intercultural skills are purple and the strategies are orange.

The second tool, a set of action-oriented pedagogical scenarios, can be used to develop and assess students' multilingual academic or professional communication skills and competences and lifelong learning skills and competences. These ten sample scenarios aim to support the development and the assessment of multilingual and multicultural academic and professional communication competences and lifelong learning skills (topics of scenarios e.g. *Reporting in an international project meeting*, *Understanding academic lectures and presentations in different cultural contexts*). The scenarios have been created for both BA and

MA levels and provide a coherent and transparent basis upon which all MAGICC results are based. They are of particular interest to higher education language teaching staff, to students, to faculties and to decision-makers for curriculum development and language policy issues.

Thirdly, the transparency tools enable shared understanding of the reference levels and transnational harmonisation of multidimensional and alternative forms of assessment. What does that mean? The tools offer a familiarisation process which serves to become acquainted with the terminology, assessment criteria and assessment grids. In addition, they contain authentic samples of students' work to create a common understanding of the different reference levels of the CEFR and the three MAGICC levels for multilingual communication competences, and intercultural communication and strategies. Moreover, they increase the understandability and user-friendliness of the reference levels and assessment criteria for teachers, students and employers. It is the objective of the tools to improve quality and recognition of broad forms of assessment. Finally, they are available in both an interactive online version and in a face-to-face format. The interactive online version is geared towards individual users while the face-to-face version is meant to bring colleagues together in workshop format.

The fourth tool, an academic ePortfolio, makes students' multilingual and multicultural profiles visible to third parties and supports self-directed learning. Work samples produced by a student can be stored in his/her ePortfolio, which serves as evidence to illustrate the individual multilingual and multicultural profile and is thought to serve as a tool to make it visible, especially for potential employers.

In addition to the four tools, an **executive summary** about the purposes and the use of MAGICC in the workplace helps employers to better understand how the multicultural and multilingual competences of their future employees are an asset to their enterprise.

## 6 Assessment & conclusions

The project has been successfully rounded off, receiving a final assessment of 9/10 from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), a branch of the European Commission, who stated that the project is evaluated as "an excellent Project which has produced high quality material with a potential for wide use" (quoted from a letter (16 November, 2015) by the head of the Dissemination and Exploitations of Programs unit, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Michael Kreyza). Furthermore, a panel of experts has selected this project as a success story, which they explained as "success stories

are finalised projects that have distinguished themselves by their impact, contribution to policy-making, innovative results and/or creative approach and can be a source of inspiration for others” (quote from the letter mentioned above).

The majority of the partners have implemented the MAGICC tools in their institutions and various higher education institutions and organizations have expressed interest in the project’s outputs, inviting various partners to speak on this (see below).

## 7 Most important publications and dissemination events resulting from project

### 7.1 Publications

Natri, Teija & Anne Räsänen. 2015. Developing a conceptual framework: the case of MAGICC. In J. Jalkanen, E. Jokinen, & P. Taalas (eds.), *Voices of pedagogical development – Expanding, enhancing and exploring higher education language learning*. 85–102. Dublin: Research-publishing.net. doi:10.14705/rpnet.2015.9781908416261 <http://research-publishing.net/content.php?doi=10.14705/rpnet.2015.9781908416261>

Forster Vosicki, Brigitte. 2015. MAGICC – Modularisation des compétences de communication académique multilingue et multiculturelle [modularising multilingual and multicultural academic communication competence]. In: *European Journal of Language Policy / Revue européenne de politique linguistique*. Vol 7, iss.2, 192–198.

Gick, Cornelia. 2016. Konzeptualisierung und Vermittlung von Mehrsprachigkeitskompetenzen in akademischer Kommunikation im Projekt MAGICC [conceptualisation and conveying of multilingual competences in academic communication in the project MAGICC]. In Kletschko, D., Sorrentino, D. (Hg.): *Deutsch im universitären Umfeld: studienvorbereitend, studienbegleitend. Tagungsakten der IDT 2013*, Verlag Bozen-Bolzano University Press (in press).

### 7.2 Workshops

Engen, Jeroen van & Meima, Estelle. 2015. Introduction to MAGICC. Workshop given at NUT docentendag [teacher day], Delft University of Technology, 15 January.

Forster Vosicki, Brigitte. 2015. MAGICC tools for a plurilingual approach. UNIL-UNIFR partner days: Empower students and staff, University of Lausanne, 16 June.

Forster Vosicki, Brigitte. 2015. Développer, documenter et évaluer la compétence de communication académique multilingue et multiculturelle des étudiants : le projet MAGICC. conférence et workshop, Aplesav-14e journées de partage pédagogique et technologique, Oniris, Nantes, 24 June.

Forster Vosicki, Brigitte. 2016. Mehrsprachige und interkulturelle Kommunikationskompetenzen der Studierenden entwickeln und beurteilen: was MAGICC dazu konkret beitragen kann. Workshop du Groupe d'intérêt de la VALS/ASLA Enseignement des langues dans les Hautes Ecoles en Suisse (GI-ELHE), University of Zürich, 29 January.

Forster Vosicki, Brigitte & Gick, Cornelia. 2015. Was ist MAGICC und was bringt es für unseren Unterricht. Ledafids-Jahrestagung 2015, 24 April.

Meima, Estelle. 2015. Becoming familiar with and implementing MAGICC. Workshop on Language Testing & Assessment, Universidad de Oriente, 5–9 October.

## 8 Link to project's website with further information

For further information about the project and access to all the tools, conceptual framework and example scenarios, please visit <http://magicc.eu>

There is also a PDF available for the entire conceptual framework, if desired.

## References

Kelly, Michael. 2013. Language competences for employability, mobility and growth. *European Journal of Language Policy*. Uk: Liverpool university Press in association with the European Language Council.



